

## **ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES**

*May 19, 2020*

*(Approved by Park and Recreation Commission vote, 5-0, on 6/2/2020)*

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday May 19, 2020 at 7:02pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member, Sarah Carrier were present. Interim Recreation Director Robert Jefferson and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Members of the Public: Bryan Elverson

Other Individuals Present: Emily Sullivan, AmberChristofferson, and Andrew Keel.

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

- **Open Forum (Public Comment)**

Ms. Mayer asked if anyone in attendance had public comment to share. Mr. Elverson joined the meeting as a representative of Arlington Adult Softball. Mr. Elverson asked for an update regarding field reopenings and on what type of policies would be in place when this occurs. Ms. Mayer stated that the Commission had not determined a reopening date or any policies at this time. More information from the State needs to be provided before these items can be determined.

**Correspondence Received –Off leash hours, Eliza Hatch - Wildlife in MRP, David Bean**

Ms. Mayer stated that correspondence was received regarding (2) topics. The first correspondence received was labeled as an emergency COVID-19 related request, regarding changes to off leash hours at the parks in town. Ms. Mayer stated that they are unable to make changes to off leash hours, as this would override the Town Bylaws which the Commission does not have the authority to do.

The second correspondence received was from David Bean. Mr. Bean reached out to the Commission regarding the public protection of living things in Menotomy Rocks Park. The concern shared was regarding the removal of snapping turtles. Ms. Mayer shared a statement from the Town's Park Bylaws that referred to the protection of plants and that their removal from parks is not allowed. Ms. Mayer noted that the by-law, however, does not specifically protect or prohibit the removal of animals, includes snapping turtles.

Ms. Sullivan contributed that the Conservation Commission does not have a policy on the removal of animals from parks. She suggested that Animal Control Officer, Diane Welch, be contacted regarding this matter.

Ms. Canniff was concerned that allowing this may create further issues, including the possibility of fish and tadpole removal. Ms. Canniff has never heard that the topic of the removal of animals being a problem. She believes the Commission should do more research regarding this matter. Ms. Mayer followed up by stating that a second email was received regarding the protection of snapping turtles. This email was from Cricket Lewis. Ms. Lewis strongly urged that the Commission should make it illegal to remove any animals from Menotomy Rocks Park or any other park in Town. This email was addressed to Commissioners with Town email addresses. Ms. Mayer also recommended that Diane Welch be contacted to see what other Towns have in place regarding this topic. Ms. Canniff volunteered to contact Ms. Welch regarding this.

**Wellington Park update - Emily Sullivan, Town Planning Department and Hatch Consultants**

Ms. Sullivan of Conservation and Planning gave an update on the project at Wellington Park. A PowerPoint, which the Commission had previously received, was presented via screen share. Ms. Sullivan gave background on the desired amenities that were unable to be added to the park in 2019. Ms. Sullivan reported that over the past several months, the project team has collected a variety of community feedback regarding what should be implemented in Phase 3. The project team received (84) responses via a Google Survey, which Ms. Sullivan was happy about as the process was virtual. Ms. Sullivan covered background information regarding the work that has been completed at Wellington Park, including on the bridge and timber boardwalk. Responders to the survey preferred having both a porous and bituminous surfacing.

Ms. Sullivan went on to state that an additional topic identified in a 2017 survey of the park was the desire for a natural play area. Wellington Park is named after an elementary school teacher and had previously had natural play areas incorporated. If added, a natural exploration area would feature a variety of different play features using natural material. These materials would be designed by a local artist, who is known for this type of naturalistic work. He contributed to the bike trail project and features trees from Massachusetts in his project.

Ms. Sullivan stated that Hatch had a great design as it focuses on new plantings, which would repopulate the park. The project team was able to identify several areas where the public would like to see new plantings. In addition, the Google Survey tried to gauge the community's knowledge of the bridge and how frequently it is used. This was done with the goal of gaining more information on the amount of usage to see if it would be worth retrofitting the current structure to make it ADA Compliant. Out of the (2) concepts for the project, the public preferred Concept B as it featured a more natural design. Concept A consisted of more pathways. Feedback from residents included that they appreciated the restoration project. The public also shared concerns regarding the long term maintenance of the facility.

Ms. Sullivan continued by sharing the current construction document for Phase 3 of the revitalization, which is about 75% complete. This document includes work to the entrance of the park. Ms. Sullivan stated that there is interest in installing a drinking fountain at the park. She also noted that the current boardwalk has an abrupt ending, which most community members do not like. The plan would be to install an extension and path to the existing bridge. Ms. Sullivan asked for the Commission's thoughts and comments regarding this.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that she had no questions and thanked Ms. Sullivan for all her work on the project. Ms. Rothenberg also mentioned that Don Vitters was contacted regarding this. It was very helpful to get his feedback, as he has been working on projects at Wellington for a longtime.

Mr. Walker stated that he had one clarification question regarding the existing ropes course. Ms. Sullivan stated that she had walked the site with representatives from Arlington High School. She asked them if the elements and current construction plan would be appropriate for the phys ed curriculum. It was determined that any work done would not be an issue. Mr. Walker stated that his concern was regarding the guy wires and that he personally preferred Concept B.

Ms. Christofferson stated that one concern that came up during the public feedback process was regarding dog walking. She stated that Concept B helps find a balance between existing users and bringing new users to the park. Ms. Caniff had no questions, stating that the concept looked wonderful and thanked the team for their work.

Mr. Lasker stated that he believes the concept looks great and that the project is headed in the right direction. Mr. Lasker asked if any of the previous work completed on the boardwalk would need to be undone during the Phase 3 construction. Andrew Keel from Hatch shared that the current boardwalk was designed in a manner which allows all structural components to be changed and repurposed. The current ramp is slightly flat. Mr. Lasker asked if it was possible to make the boardwalk continuous to the new path. Mr. Keel stated that other concepts had a split boardwalk that went around the guy wire. He continued by stating that the

current design, which was preferred, is nice because it creates a natural seating area. Mr. Keel said it is a possible option to make a continuous boardwalk.

Mr. Lasker followed up by asking if the work that was previously completed and had compromised one of the adventure course guy wires had been fixed. Ms. Sullivan stated that a specific contractor, currently on the west coast, will be brought in following the pandemic to inspect and have the work completed. Current plans include driving the guy wire down and securing it. This should be completed in June. Mr. Lasker asked for clarification on what this phase covers and the timeline. Ms. Sullivan stated since they are receiving CDBG funding, the design work needs to be ADA Compliant and completed by the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Lasker asked if the work provided storm water benefits, which Ms. Sullivan confirmed. Ms. Carrier stated that she had no questions.

Ms. Mayer stated that concerns had been raised about the boardwalk bridge leading to nowhere, and she was a little disappointed that nothing had been added to the design when more than 50% of survey respondents indicated that they currently use the bridge. She stated that if the Town is investing significant funds in the bridge then some consideration should be given to where it leads. There is currently no use planned for the north side of the brook, as the terrain and private property issues are challenging. As a compromise to this, a small overlook was discussed.

Ms. Mayer stated that the DPW has had trouble maintaining drinking fountains in the past. She stated they have had issues with vandalism and found them filled with sand and rocks by children using them for play. The Town has not been putting them into parks and playground because of the high maintenance required. Ms. Rothenberg stated that the project group did a great deal of research on this and since there are so many courts, this would be an ideal location to put in a water bottle filling station (not a drinking fountain). Ms. Rothenberg believes Wellington would be a good location to pilot a filling station.

Ms. Lasker requested that Ms. Sullivan email him as he could provide her with additional information on water filling stations, as he has installed these in other locations. Ms. Mayer asked if there was any additional data on their upkeep. Mr. Lasker stated that installing a water filling station rather than a fountain is a much better idea and would require less maintenance. He also stated that there is the option to install a lockable water spigot which could be used to fill larger water containers.

Ms. Sullivan shared the design again and Ms. Christofferson stated to the Commission that the topic of the other side of the bridge was previously discussed. The goals of the project are to meet the budget, requirements, while retrofit the existing bridge. She requested Mr. Keel speak on this and asked him if there was any possibility of adding more planting on the other side. Ms. Mayer stated that the Google Survey showed that currently 50% of people use the bridge and that improvements would most likely increase use. Andrew stated that accessibility is required to be a part of this project. The current design shows the bridge at 6ft wide. He believes that one possible option is to make a projection, which would be off the bridge. This area would be a 6ft wide space and could be used as both a viewing space and turnaround. Mr. Keel shared his thoughts on the previous question of additional plantings/feature on the other side of the bridge. He stated that it would be hard to access this area for construction and that any additions would increase the cost. Ms. Christofferson asked if there is a way to tie in the two ends to make them ADA accessible. Ms. Mayer asked if the bridge was included. Mr. Keel confirmed that the bridge work was not a part of the project and that they would need to take some creative measures to incorporate adding this. Andrew stated that the cost estimate is included, as it is important to determine a hierarchy of needs and wants. The assessment for the bridge is part of this project, but design and construction is not. Ms. Rothenberg stated that she discussed this with Don Vitters and any alterations would be expensive. It was suggested that this be included in a future project, as they currently need to meet ADA Standards. Mr. Lasker asked if the current bridge could be left untouched and if just a turnaround could be installed at its current ending. He stated that this addition would create a destination and turnaround, but would not impact the structure of existing bridge.

Ms. Mayer followed up by asking at which point in the process will there be a more detailed design for the natural play area. Ms. Christofferson stated that she wanted to layout the design. Mr. Keel stated that they were roughly at 45-50% completion of the design. The team anticipates getting another revised sketch from the artist within the next week which will be a more developed concept sketch. This updated sketch will look close to what the final design will be.

Ms. Rothenberg had a question regarding the cost estimate. The naturalistic play and seating area is the largest part of the budget at \$25,000. Ms. Christofferson stated that planting were actually listed at \$30,00 and bridge estimate is at \$50,000. Ms. Mayer stated that the estimate for trail resurfacing is greater than these both. Ms. Rothenberg is unsure how much of the design the Commission has seen, but requested Commission Members to review the design in great detail. She touched on how there are numerous users of this facility including neighbors and individuals from the nearby preschools. Ms. Mayer stated that there had been a conversation if natural features were considered play equipment which would require safety surfacing and fall zones. Mr. Keel stated that none of the designed features are high enough to require safety surfacing or fall zones. He continued by saying that it gets tricky when looking to use a more natural material, as this may be harder to access. The current design features materials that are non-traditional, which leaves an element of personal preference. Mr. Keel stated that it would be a combination of low designed boulders and logs. The best surfacing for this design may be a lawn as it is porous, naturalist, and easy for the DPW to maintain.

Ms. Mayer believes that the Commission will need to see this in more detail. Mr. Keel stated they are working on a revised plan and that surfacing can be changed. Ms. Mayer asked if a similar design had been installed at Fresh Pond. Mr. Keel confirmed this and Ms. Christofferson stated this was done at another location in Cambridge as well. Ms. Mayer stated that Ms. Rothenberg and Mr. Vitters should be a part of the conversations and that the Commission would like to review the design when it is at 90%. Ms. Christofferson stated that they will be a part of the conversation, as their advice will be very helpful. Ms. Canniff asked if Mr. Vitters wanted to be involved, and Ms. Mayer confirmed. Ms. Mayer asked when this information will be going out to the public. Ms. Christofferson stated this would be sent out in June. She also stated that CDBG funds need to be used by end of June but there is a possibility of getting this extended. Ms. Sullivan confirmed early-mid June. Ms. Mayer stated the Commission would be meeting next on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, which might be too soon for the 90% design. Ms. Sullivan stated that the goal would be to go to the public and then present to the Commission. The design will need to be approved by Conservation Commission also. Ms. Mayer stated that the timeframe was reasonable and asked if they needed anything else to move forward. Ms. Sullivan said no and that they will keep the Commission updated.

#### Discussion about Recreation concerns moving forward - Update from MRPA

Mr. Vaillette reported on updates regarding current and future Recreation Department programs, including summer camp. Currently, like most other recreation departments, Arlington is waiting on more guidance from the state regarding the opening process for camps and beaches. No decision has been made regarding these operations for the 2020 summer as of yet, but the department anticipates them both running in some capacity. Mr. Vaillette has been working on summer hiring and is ready to move forward with the hiring of up to (90) seasonal staff members when the decision is made regarding summer operations.

Ms. Canniff asked if the department had reached out to Arlington Public Schools yet regarding facility usage for this summer. Mr. Vaillette responded that he was waiting until a decision was made regarding opening dates for this summer before he reaches out. Ms. Rothenberg followed up by stating that other programs in Town have reached out to APS and have not heard back.

Mr. Jefferson confirmed they have not heard anything from the Town on summer operations including camp and Reservoir Beach. More information regarding these operations (opening time frames, policies, etc.) should be available in the coming weeks and will be made available to the public as soon as possible.

#### Updates for Robbins Farm and Poets Tennis Courts

Mr. Jefferson gave an update on Robbins Farm. Mr. Jefferson met with several individuals last week regarding the health of the grass. The decision was made that the grass was healthy enough for the temporary fence to be removed, and the field to be used for casual use. Guidance on treatment was provided by STS, with treatment occurring Friday of last week.

Ms. Rothenberg asked if a formal plan was established and in place for field treatment moving forward. Mr. Jefferson stated that they are waiting for a long-term treatment proposal. This proposal would ultimately need to go to the Parks Department and managed by their staff. Having a long-term maintenance plan with STS will cost additional fees, as the Town is currently under contract with Leahy. Ms. Rothenberg thanked him for getting closer to a plan. Mr. Lasker thanked Mr. Jefferson for taking on this project.

Mr. Jefferson stated that they have been working at Poets Corner to remove the current tennis courts, which were in rough shape. There was a slight issue as normally tennis courts are typically 4 inches thick, while the courts at Poets were up to 10 inches thick. This was not anticipated and there will be extra removal costs. The project includes the cost of the court removal and hydro seeding. The cost estimate does not include the cost for loam. Mr. Jefferson stated that the department has already received several calls from neighbors thanking them for the removal of the tennis court. Ms. Caniff asked if anyone knew what was located inside the metal green boxes at Poets Corner. Mr. Jefferson stated the materials including sand dry and other equipment were in the boxes which belonged to youth baseball. Mr. Jefferson plans on having a conversation with the DPW about relocating these storage boxes.

#### Capital Project Updates – Reservoir, Date for KZLA Kick Off Meeting, and Lussiano Playground

Ms. Mayer asked if there were any updates on the Reservoir Phase 1 project. Mr. Jefferson stated that the new electrical pole, which will provide power to the pump house, had not been installed yet. Jim Feeney informed Mr. Jefferson that Eversource is ready for the pole, but Verizon will need to come in to move wires. Mr. Jefferson stated they closed the main access to the water and put in new sand. The Town Tree Warden visited the property on Friday and tree work will be occurring in the near future. Mr. Jefferson hopes that construction should be done by early June, but that this is all dependent on the determined opening date due to COVID-19. Phase 1 is wrapping up and the Commission Members had no questions.

Mr. Jefferson stated that the Commission needs to pick a date for the KZLA kick-off meeting for Phase 2. Commission Members discussed possible meeting dates and determined that they would like the meeting date to be after the new Recreation Director begins. Joe Connelly has been hired as the new Recreation Director and will be starting at the end of May. KZLA had availability in the afternoons and evenings of June 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>. The Commission determined that before their next meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, a 6:30 kick off will be held with KZLA. Mr. Jefferson will confirm if the 30 minute time frame works and what KZLA would like to cover during this time.

Ms. Mayer stated that bids for the Lussiano playground are due by 11:00am on 5/21. Mr. Jefferson stated that he will receive bids from Dominic Lanzillotti of Purchasing and will work with new Recreation Director to determine the lowest bidder, pending no incorrect information. Ms. Mayer asked if there were any inquiries regarding this bid. Mr. Jefferson stated they received one inquiry regarding substituting equipment. Mr. Jefferson stated they department would be buying equipment separately regardless.

#### Park and Recreation Updates from the Director

Ms. Mayer stated that all Recreation Department operations are on hold, including the approval of permits. Mr. Jefferson stated that all programs through June 29<sup>th</sup> will most likely be cancelled in the coming weeks. This includes HRC Camp and several weeks of tennis. The department plans on focusing on future programs once more information is made available. Ms. Mayer stated that tennis in general was listed in Phase 2 of the State's guidance on the reopening process. Mr. Jefferson clarified these were camp programs being cancelled.

#### Approval of Minutes (May 5th, 2020)

Ms. Mayer brought up approval of minutes. Ms. Canniff made the motion to approve the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for May 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Lasker seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call to vote to approve the minutes for the May 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes. All (5) Commissioners responded yes, approving the minutes.

#### Next Meetings

Ms. Mayer stated that the next Park and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Once again, Joe Connelly has been hired as the department's new Recreation Director. Mr. Jefferson stated that he will be working with Mr. Connelly for several days to create a smooth transition and will assist as need on capital projects moving forward.

#### Comments and Items For Future Meetings

Ms. Mayer asked Ms. Carrier if she had the opportunity to speak with Ms. Shozawa about her art installation, as discussed at the previous meeting. Ms. Carrier stated that she spoke with Ms. Shozawa and that all items of the installation were down except one piece. That one piece would be coming down. Ms. Carrier will check to make sure that this remaining piece has been removed. Ms. Mayer stated that this was approved as event and thanked Ms. Carrier for helping with this.

Ms. Carrier asked if working groups for Phase 2 of the Reservoir Project has been established. Ms. Mayer stated that no working group has been defined, but one will be moving forward.

Ms. Mayer asked if there was any information regarding the Rider street property. Mr. Jefferson stated that materials will most likely be housed there during construction of DPW Grove St. property.

Ms. Mayer thanked Mr. Jefferson for all his hard work as the Interim Recreation Director. She stated that he was able to get things moving in the right direction during a difficult time. All Commission members also personally thanked Mr. Jefferson for his time and efforts.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:34pm. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.